

# The Heritage Society of Essex & Middle River



Founded  
September 26, 1968  
Officers 1969-70

*Seated: Mary Corey (Treasurer), Laura Hensler (Vice President), Alex Baumgartner (President), Helen Baumgartner (Secretary). Standing: Horace McCarter (Publicity), Emma Dunham (Trustee), Earle Scoggins (Sergeant at Arms), Virginia Borsos (Trustee), John Ruley (Historian), Kay Wolfe (Trustee).*

We thank our founding members Mr. and Mrs. Alex and Helen Baumgartner, their family, and peers for establishing our premiere Baumgartner Collection. The collection captures a historical snapshot of life in Essex and Middle River, Maryland. The collection contains nearly 300 categorical binders documenting our community activities with articles, pamphlets, and photographs from 1969 through the 1980s. The Heritage Society has scanned the collection to our website to share with our extended community. As we continue to build new collections, we are seeking new materials such as photographs and ephemera that pertain to the community and business history of Essex and Middle River. Please contact [essexmuseum@gmail.com](mailto:essexmuseum@gmail.com) if you have historical memories or items to donate or would like to become a member.

**The Heritage Society of Essex and Middle River, Inc.**  
**516 Eastern Blvd, Essex, Maryland 21221**  
[essexmuseum.com](http://essexmuseum.com)

*Collections processed and scanned by: Rita Sellers, Jenny Parish, and Scott Huffines*

Guttenberger  
No 23

**essexmuseum.com**





[essexmuseum.com](http://essexmuseum.com)

GUTTENBURGER'S GROCERY 1920





GUTTENBURGER'S GROCERY - ANN GUTTENBURGER, ~~JOHN GUTTENBURGER~~, JOHN GUTTENBURGER

1921





Times Photo By Charles Weiss

## Joy of life

*Times Sept 13 - 1979*

John M. Guttenberger, who operates the general store founded by his father in 1910, reflects the joy he feels in having been born and raised in Essex, hard by the banks of the placid Back River.

*No. 23*

**essexmuseum.com**





1920



essexmuseum.com

Anna Guttenger  
Mrs Hoffmeister  
John Guttenger

1921





ANN & JOHN GUTTENBERGER

1940

1940





essexmuseum.com

Ann & John Buttenberger  
1940



# ANACHRONISM IN ESSEX

EXTRA / May 14, 1972

John Guttenberger operates his store  
just as his father did

Story By CORINNE F. HAMMETT

Photographs by Fred G. Kraft Jr.



■ In 1910 when lots were \$150 and up, Henry Guttenberger bought "a splendid investment" at Mace and Eastern Aves. He built a two-story, with attic, white frame country style structure that was to serve as home for his family and, on the lower floor, opened the first retail establishment in Essex.

It was a pleasant site. A large fruit and vegetable farm was on the other side of Mace Avenue and to the left, stretched acres of inviting land dotted with a few houses.

As he expected, his general store prospered. In a few years he added an annex and stocked the new rooms with dry goods.

Today Henry Guttenberger wouldn't recognize the area.

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stacked their boldly lettered signs run together in a jarring visual travesty. Traffic adds an equally harsh cacophony of sound.

But Guttenberger's "splendid investment" with its long, broad country porch has stood its ground.

Sadly, however, the neighborhood that has grown up around the old general store has mostly forgotten it.

Said one area resident: "I knew it was there—there's a bus stop in front of it, but I always thought it was a condemned building."

A woman, chatting with another resident on nearby Dorsey Avenue, commented: "Well, I go to the chain store but the kids go there a lot for penny candy."

And that's descriptive of the decaying charm that is Guttenberger's General Store.

"In the old days we used to be open from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. and we did at least \$100 worth of business each day — now I'm lucky if I get anywhere near \$10 — we sold a lot of snuff then, too." John Guttenberger, the last of Henry's five children, runs the store — he still sells snuff, in small, bright red round containers and his prize "antique" is a 1929 orange box of "Gold Dust" soap powder, which he keeps on one of the sparsely stocked shelves in back of the counter.

He opens the store at 9 a.m. and closes at 6; "It gives me something to do," except on Wednesdays when he closes at 1:30 p.m. so he can do the buying.

"I do everything myself, don't trust nobody else," says Guttenberger, who wore a heavy dark



brown sweater in spite of the 70-degree temperature. His steel grey and white hair was plastered back and his slightly stern but pleasant face is blocky and trimmed with a white stubble.

In the space of about two and a half hours eight customers came into the store, three of them school children.

With each he exchanged mild banter; "I kid everybody. That's all I do all day, if I couldn't do that might as well be dead . . . if anybody takes offense, that's their problem."

Occasionally, some do. He asked a little girl buying candy, "Do ya want a poke?" She did. As he filled the small, brown paper bag, he related: "A lady came in one day and I asked her if she wanted a poke . . . she didn't know what a poke was . . . so I told her and then I said, 'In Baltimore we call a woman a bag.' You know, she got real mad and walked outta the store . . . never been back."

The little girl perched on an ice cream storage box and ate her lunch of a bottle of pop and cupcakes. A boy, about 13, took a cigarette out of his pack which "Mr. John keeps for me — we can't take 'em to school. I come home from school for lunch now," he added, "my mother thinks it'll keep me outta trouble . . . yeah, guess it does, some."

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He pointed to some built-in, small wooden shelves in back of the counter: "Bet you haven't seen shelves like these." They were like tiny, individual boxes with little doors and once held peppers and

other spices.

The changes of the years and in the neighborhood's habits are reflected in the general store.

An old, floor-to-ceiling wood refrigerator, with large panel doors takes up almost one entire side wall. At the top, to the right is a door that once opened onto a case for ice storage — when people used to buy ice. Now the large refrigerator holds only a few bottles of soda pop.

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A tall, treelike plant is in the next window; "That was supposed to be a banana plant but it doesn't

do anything," said Guttenberger, who says he enjoys working with the plants when he has the time.

He keeps some other old memories in a small box bearing the penciled notation "OP," for old papers. It holds a 1929 calendar, some newspaper clippings, yellowed and cracking, about Essex and the general store, and a couple of dishes with calendars and scenes on them. The clippings recall the days when his father was also the area's justice of the peace and when cases were tried in their parlor.

A couple of photographs of the general store show Guttenberger and his two brothers and sister on the front porch, but they're only tiny figures in old-fashioned clothing.

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But it will be open for business, as usual, at 9 a.m. tomorrow.

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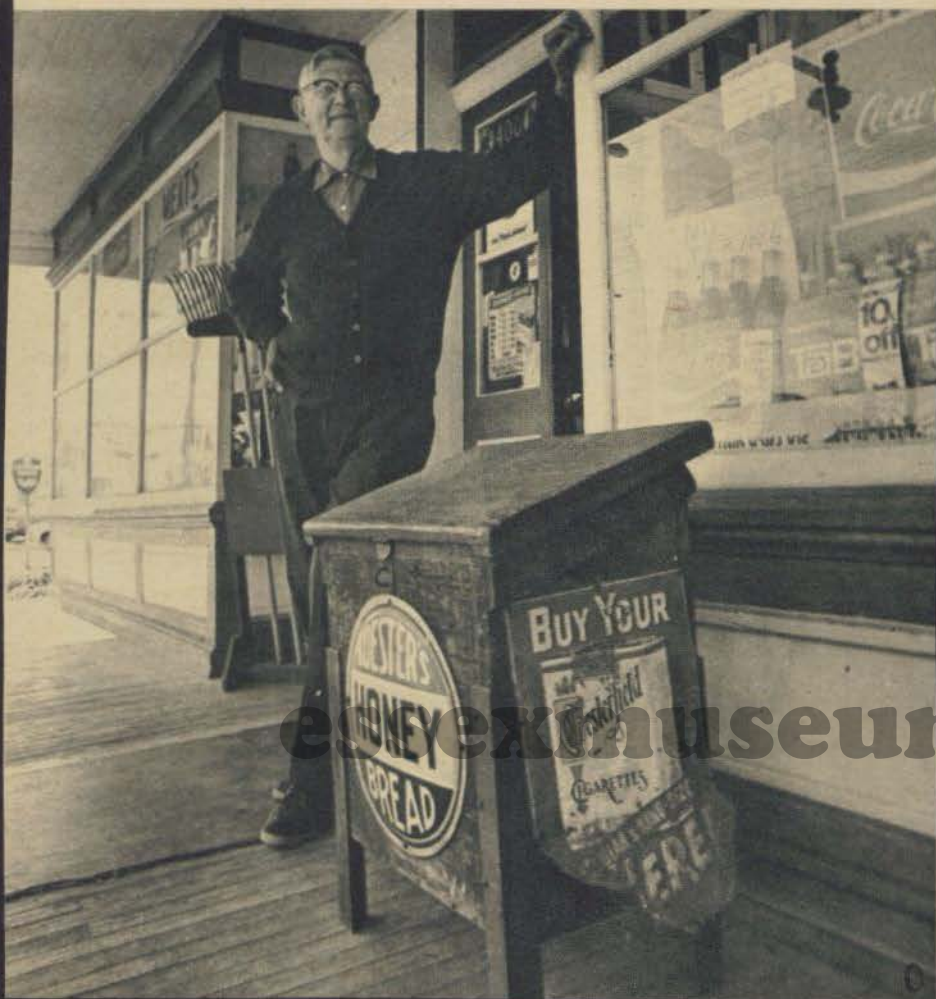
"I love that tree," said a woman, "it gets so thick so fast and when it rains you can stand under it and never get wet." She observed

*Continued*



The Elbert E. Saulsbury Salesbook Co., Baltimore, Md.





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essexmuseum.com





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"I love that tree," said a woman, "it gets so thick so fast and when it rains you can stand under it and never get wet." She observed

the neighborhood: "It's not so pretty here I guess, but it's convenient and when the trees are green they hide some of the ugly spots."

That walnut tree, said Guttenberger, was brought over from Germany in 1937 . . . "you can't eat the walnuts though."

Walking down the streets in back of the general store, Dorsey, Mace, Franklyn, the mostly individual houses are frame and painted white, a few are in pastel colors, almost all the yards are fenced in and many have shrubs and rows of flowers. Many elderly persons are seen chatting over fences, washing cars, sitting on porches. Young children play near the apartment complexes that now stand where the farm once flourished.

"This used to be a real booming area during the war," said one woman who grew up on Dorsey Street, "but it's going downhill now." "It's quiet though," said another woman "and most of the neighbors are nice . . . I can remember when we came here, there weren't any sidewalks, or sewers; we put a lot of work into this place . . ."

But like the customers who once frequented the general store, "most of the people I knew here when I grew up are gone now," said a woman whose five children are among those who still drop in for candy and a chat with Guttenberger.

Said Guttenberger: "At least you don't have to stand in line here like you do in those chain stores . . ."





GENERAL MERCHANDISE



G-A STORE

HENRY GUTTENBERGER & SONS

CERTIFIED ESSKAY MEAT DEALER

400 BLOCK EASTERN AVE.

PHONE ESSEX 9 M.

ESSEX BALTIMORE, MD., 3-5 1947

Mr. William J. Shaller

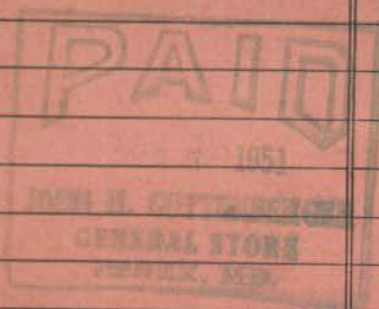
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KAESER & BLAIR, INC., CIN., O.

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No. 12

(#23)

# GUTTENBERGERS STORE

The first grocery store built in Essex in 1909 by the Taylor Land Co. was located on the corner of Eastern Avenue and Mace Avenue. It was purchased by Henry Guttenberger as both a home and a store. The building still stands and is run by Henry's son John Guttenberger.

**essexmuseum.com**

picture is on  
other side of  
this page





GENERAL STORE COR. MACE AND EASTERN AVES. ESSEX



**Congratulations  
graduates!**



# The Avenue News

Vol. 17, No. 29

May 30, 1991

10 Cents



## Part One:

## Goodbye, Guttenberger's Store

By Jackie Dimeler

A chapter of Essex history concludes today as John Guttenberger closes for the last time the doors of the general store at the corner of Eastern and Mace that his family first opened in 1910. Poor economy rather than age or health is the reason John cites for his retirement. "I'm lucky if I sold one soda and a pack of cigarettes a week in the last few months," says the white-haired proprietor who has been a fixture at the store since age eight. Now with his business licenses up for renewal June 1, the 88-year-old gentleman is ready to close shop rather than face another year of losses.

John, along with his nephew George Guttenberger and niece Joann Geiger gathered recently to reminisce about the significant role of their family in Essex history.

John's memories go back to the early 1900s in Highlandtown where Henry and Barbara Guttenberger began raising their family with John the oldest, then Mike, and later Anna

and George born in Essex. Henry was a grocer with a store on Lombard Street and a home on Foster Ave. He had aspirations to offer his family a better way of life -- a life in the country.

Beckoning to the east down the shell road and across the sparkling waters of Back River, was a new way of life, an innovative development called Essex: "the rising suburb of the east," so dubbed by the developer. Sixteen cents a day could buy a lot, priced at \$150 and up -- "about 2¢ a square foot." Terms were \$5 down and \$5 a month.

Henry Guttenberger, a wise businessman as well as a smart investor, knew as the settlement of Essex grew, so would the need for a general store. He approached the Schludenberg-Kurdle (Esskay) Company for backing and in 1910 moved into the custom-designed store with upstairs living quarters at the prime location in the center of Essex. The store was equipped with solid oak shelves, decorative moulding and built-in bins for spices and vegetables. Remarkably, it looks much the same today. A wide front porch allowed for lounging by cus-



Public hearing June 25



## Public Hearing June 23 on Cultural Parks Zoning

The County Council will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, June 15 at 7:30 p.m., County Council Hearing Chamber, Second Floor Court House, Towson, on the Final Report of the Baltimore County Planning Board concerning proposed amendments to the Baltimore County Zoning Regulations concerning Cultural Center Parks (report dated March 21).

Copies of the proposed amendments are available for public inspection on the bulletin board of the County Office Building; at the Office of Planning and Zoning, County Courts Building, Towson, MD 21204; Office of the County Council, Second Floor, Courthouse, Towson, MD 21204 and at the Essex Library.

tomers who frequented the store not only for groceries, but for dry goods including clothes, and even for Henry's services as justice of the peace.

The name "Essex" did not catch on right away, recalls John. Folks still referred to the growing community as Rossville, the postal designation.

Attached to the store was a packing house where local truck farmers would bring their tomatoes to be canned. John remembers looking across the shell road and seeing nothing but woods; a glance to the left would bring a glimpse of the one-room schoolhouse (now the corner of Taylor Ave.) An occasional horse and buggy would pass by; the streetcar line went only as far as Back River Bridge.

John began working at the new store almost immediately, putting in (See Guttenger's, page 2A)



A frequent sight for Eastern Ave. travellers over the years, John Guttenger relaxes on the porch with his dog, Boomer.

## Comprehensive Zoning Process begins in August

Every four years, as required by the Baltimore County Charter, the County Council reviews and revises the county's Comprehensive Zoning maps.

"All land in Baltimore County is open for rezoning and anyone can raise an issue on any piece of property at this time," according to Joan Morrissey Ward of OPZ, guest speaker at last week's Turkey Point Improvement Assn. meeting. Those interested in requesting rezoning should do research, get maps and an application through their community planner. The applicant needs an address and property number for each parcel. This year, fees will be charged to each applicant, reduced to \$75 for community associations requesting rezoning, informed Ms. Ward.

The filing period extends from Aug. 1 through Jan. 15, 1992.

Baltimore County law provides that, during the open filing period (Aug. 1 to Oct. 31), any person, association, corporation, County agency or other entity may file a petition for zoning reclassification on any property in the county. Certain information must be filed with the petition, all of which becomes a matter of public record identified by an Issue Number. From Nov. 1 through Nov. 30 additional issues can be raised, but only by the

members of the Baltimore County Planning Board. Dec. 1 through Jan. 15, 1992 allows for issues to be raised by the members of the County Council.

Log of Issues - preliminary recommendations from Jan. 16 through March 30, 1992.

Each of the issues raised during the filing periods are analyzed by County staff. Summary data about each issue, along with the preliminary staff recommendations, are published in the seven volume of the "Log of Issues." The Log and the accompanying maps comprise a report by the County Planning Board for the purpose of public hearings in April. Also during this time period, notice is mailed to the owners of those properties which are listed in the Log but which were not filed by the owner or the owner's agent.

The Planning Board will hold public hearing from April 1 through April 30, 1992.

(See Zoning, page 2A)



The Joint Veterans Assn. conducted Memorial Day services Sunday at the Catholic War Veterans monument in front of St. Clare Church.

**BAY COUNTY EAST  
LOCATOR MAP  
PAGE 9C**



(Continued from page 1A)

full-time hours after he left school at the end of third grade. "All us kids worked in the store," he explains. Besides waiting on customers, weighing food and stocking shelves, they also delivered to customers' homes, either by foot or horse and buggy. As the community grew, so grew the business. "Doing \$1,000 business on a Saturday was nothing," interjects Mr. Guttenberger.

Social life in those days revolved around the church and the Guttenbergers were loyal members of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish, attending weekly if not daily Mass, chicken dinners, plays and other "socials." There were lots of kids in the neighborhood to call on for a game of stick ball, tag or a romp in the woods.

Henry Guttenberger had milk, bread and meat delivered to the store but made a weekly buggy trip to Baltimore markets for products such as Gold Dust soap powder, Fels Naptha and Octagon soap (a few of which still sit on the shelves). By the 1920s, the store had added gasoline pumps for automobiles and was delivering goods as far away as Middle River.

Some of the early customers John recalls are Joe Banz, Ida Hawk, Melvin Brehm, Charles Fousek, Ronald Benedict, Thomas Seubert, John Reese, Laura Regulski, Howard Hundley, Joe Schamer and Marie Bradley.

In 1921, John's brothers George and Mike left the store to open a car agency selling Model Ts and other automobiles on an Eastern Ave. lot where the Essex Medical Center now stands. Neither John nor his sister Annie ever married and continued running the store with their dad after their mother's death in 1929.

In the 30s, the Depression was felt by the business as well as the family. Folks were just buying necessities, relates John. As for the Guttenberger family, Henry, who always enjoyed "gunning", began bringing home more of his prey to help feed the clan.

In the 40s, as Middle River boomed with the opening of Glenn L. Martin Company, the general store boomed also. The store was open from 8 to 4 daily, and just a half day Wednesdays, informs John, and at night they'd stock the shelves. "Our father had us working all the time -- you know how the Germans are..."

Unfortunately, the 50s began a downward slide for the store which never quite recovered to its previous prosperity. A massive fire in the Essex business district put many merchants out on the street and although Guttenberger's wasn't affected physically, it drained shoppers from Essex to other areas such as Middlesex and Eastpoint.

(Part Two next week)

Church, 8700 Harford Road, Parkville. Zip codes include 21013, 21030, 21051, 21057, 21082, 21087, 21093, 21128, 21131, 21156, 21204, 21206, 21212, 21234, 21236, and 21239.

\* June 24; Middle River Boys Club, 1413 Fuselage Ave., Middle River. Zip codes include 21021, 21027, 21162, 21220, and 21237.

Food distribution will begin at 8:30 a.m. and last until the food runs out, except at the American Legion Post where the distribution will be from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Food distribution will be supervised by the county's Department of Community Development, and additional information can be obtained by calling the department at 887-5688. Residents are asked not to call the distribution sites for information.



Guttenberger's Store featured a full line of groceries up until recent years.

\* Balance. An attack of dizziness or a misstep can lead to disaster. Most boating deaths occur when people fall out of boats, or land in the water when the boat capsizes.;

\* Hypothermia. Alcohol gives a false sense of warmth. In reality it can help the body lose heat, fatally.

Boating while intoxicated is not only dangerous, but illegal. At the end



Brother and sister John and Anna Guttenberger worked at the store together until her death in 1965.



In 1921 Guttenberger's Store was the hub of neighborhood activity. Shown are Anna, Mrs. Hofsteter (an employee), and John.



Part Two:

# Goodbye, Guttenberger's Store

By Jackie Dimeler

A lot of well-known people have visited Guttenberger's Store, recalls owner John Guttenberger who closed the business last week after 81 years of operation. Long a meeting place for locals, the store was also visited by former politicians Ted Venetoullis, Don Hutchinson, Dennis Rasmussen, and Norman Lauenstein and was the subject of several newspaper articles which John has saved. Just a few weeks ago Guttenberger's was featured on WJZ's "Maryland by George" with George Baumann who discovered the store while in Essex on another assignment.

Some of the most frequent clients of bygone days were children. Coming in with a nickel, they spent many minutes choosing penny candy from the confection case. John's niece Joann Geiger especially remembers the red hot dollars, lollipops and licorice sticks. A dime would buy you a whole bagful. Although Guttenberger's never had a fountain, they served hand-dipped ice cream which kids would sit out on the front steps to eat.

When his sister Anna died in 1965, John took over the business single-handedly, closing only in the event of severe illness. "He's never had a vacation and never travelled past Towson," interjects nephew George Guttenberger. John never considered modernizing the store, other than replacing the porch when it began to deteriorate. The same oak shelves, old-time meat scale and cash register that greeted customers years ago are there today.

John's retirement was not a long-planned event. "I just made up my mind a couple weeks ago," nods the owner. License fees were due and business down to almost nothing. John hasn't handled meat at the store for over 10 years and a few staples, sodas, and cigarettes were the mainstay of his stock.

next day. They regularly "charged" a week's groceries with the tab tallied by John in a large ledger; he never used an adding machine. There were a few, however, who never paid up, and their names are still recorded in the back of John's ledger. Most are dead now.

About the only hobby John kept up with over the years has been caring for the plants which decorate his storefront windows, some 50 years old.

John still drives a car, but only to church on Sunday. Although his roots are at Mt. Carmel where he served as an altar boy and attended daily Mass for years, he switched to St. Clare's Parish since it was less distance to travel.

What does he look forward to in retirement? John's not sure. "I'll just take it easy for awhile then decide what to do." His family hopes he will travel a bit and see a little of the world. "A lot of businesses have come and gone in Essex," says nephew George. "but John's always been here. I hate to see it happen," he adds of his uncle's retirement, "but he's paid his dues."

One plan John announced last week is sure to please his old friends and customers -- he says he and his 14-year-old dog Boomer will continue to lounge on the wide wooden porch of the store when weather permits. Old habits are hard to break.

## ★Operation

(Continued from page 1A)

The mandatory seatbelt laws began in 1980 when more than 50,000 people were killed in accidents. By 1989 that number had decreased to 45,555 due to an increase in safety belt usage.

Studies show that the use of lap and shoulder safety belts can reduce the risk of fatal or serious occupant injury between 40 and 55 percent.

Motor vehicle crashes are the lead-



When the 55 bus stopped at the corner, John was able to count on a few customers, but that ended quite a while ago. Even Essex revitalization failed to bring the business back. The biggest addition to Essex was the Motor Vehicles Administration, notes John, but patrons took their business to closer locations than Guttenberger's Store.

Yet John recalls with clarity the years when a loaf of bread was 10¢, a dozen eggs were 25¢, and cigarettes -- now \$15 a carton -- were 10¢ a pack. He has kept a few products from the old stock as well as promotional items, plates and calendars, presented to customers as holiday gifts.

A man's word was good as gold in those days for the most part, says John. Folks would borrow an umbrella if it began to rain and return it the

ing cause of death for people between the age of 6 and 34 in the U.S. and are the leading trauma-related cause of spinal cord injuries, police said.

The police are striving for 70 percent usage by motorists and toward that end will begin a campaign to educate motorists about the positive effects wearing seatbelts can have on the national death toll.

Last month, officers took their campaign to the schools to promote the program. This month they are available to any and all civic groups who desire an officer to attend meetings armed with literature about seatbelt safety.

For details contact the community relations officer in your district. In Essex, call 887-0220 and ask for Officer Diana Munson and in Rosedale call Officer Bob Fletcher at 887-5038.



This 1910 photo of the store was used in a promotional booklet extolling the virtues of life in Essex. The sign posted on the porch announces weekly meetings of the Essex Permanent Building and Loan Assn.

[essexmuseum.com](http://essexmuseum.com)





**John Guttenberger put up the closed sign for the last time last Friday on the door of the 81-year-old general store at Eastern and Mace Ave.**

**essexmuseum.com**







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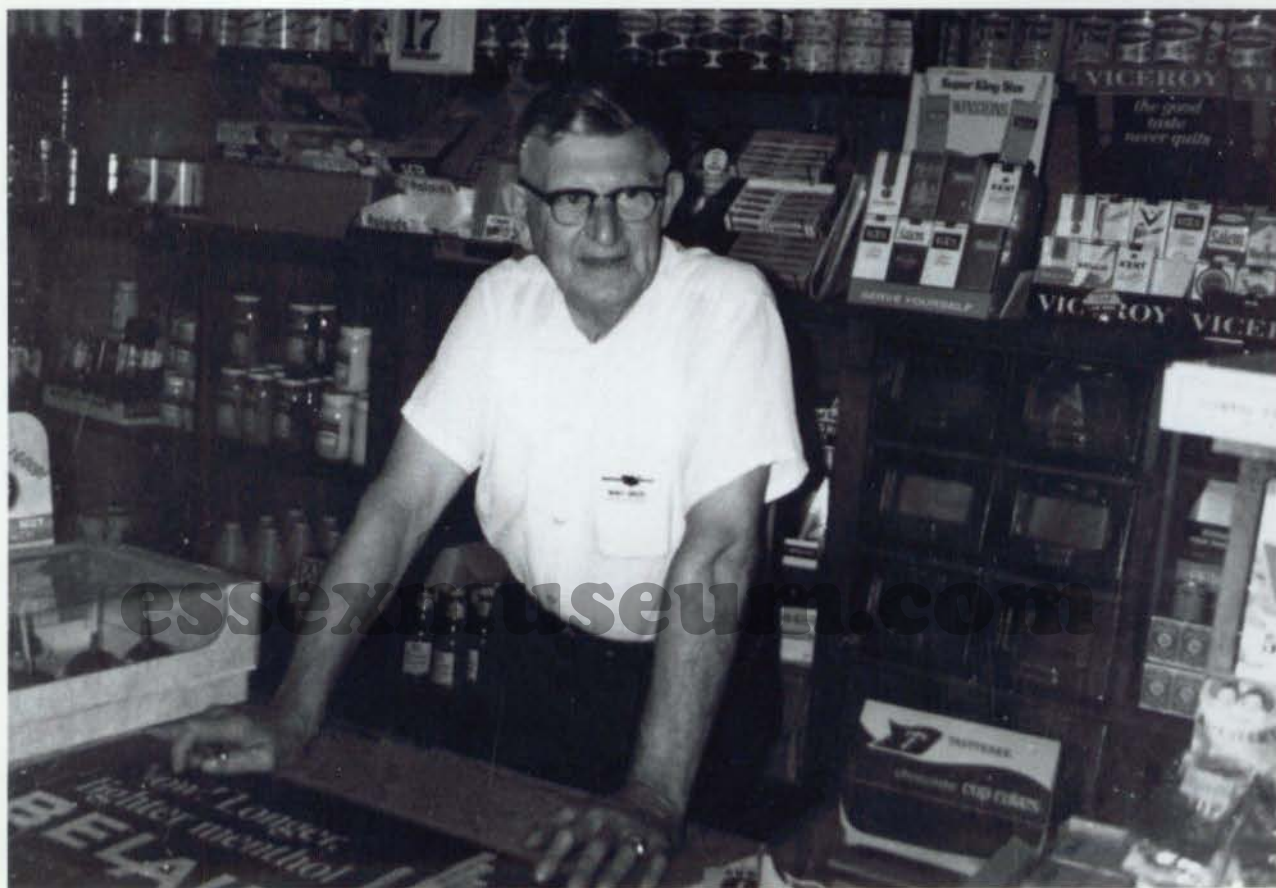
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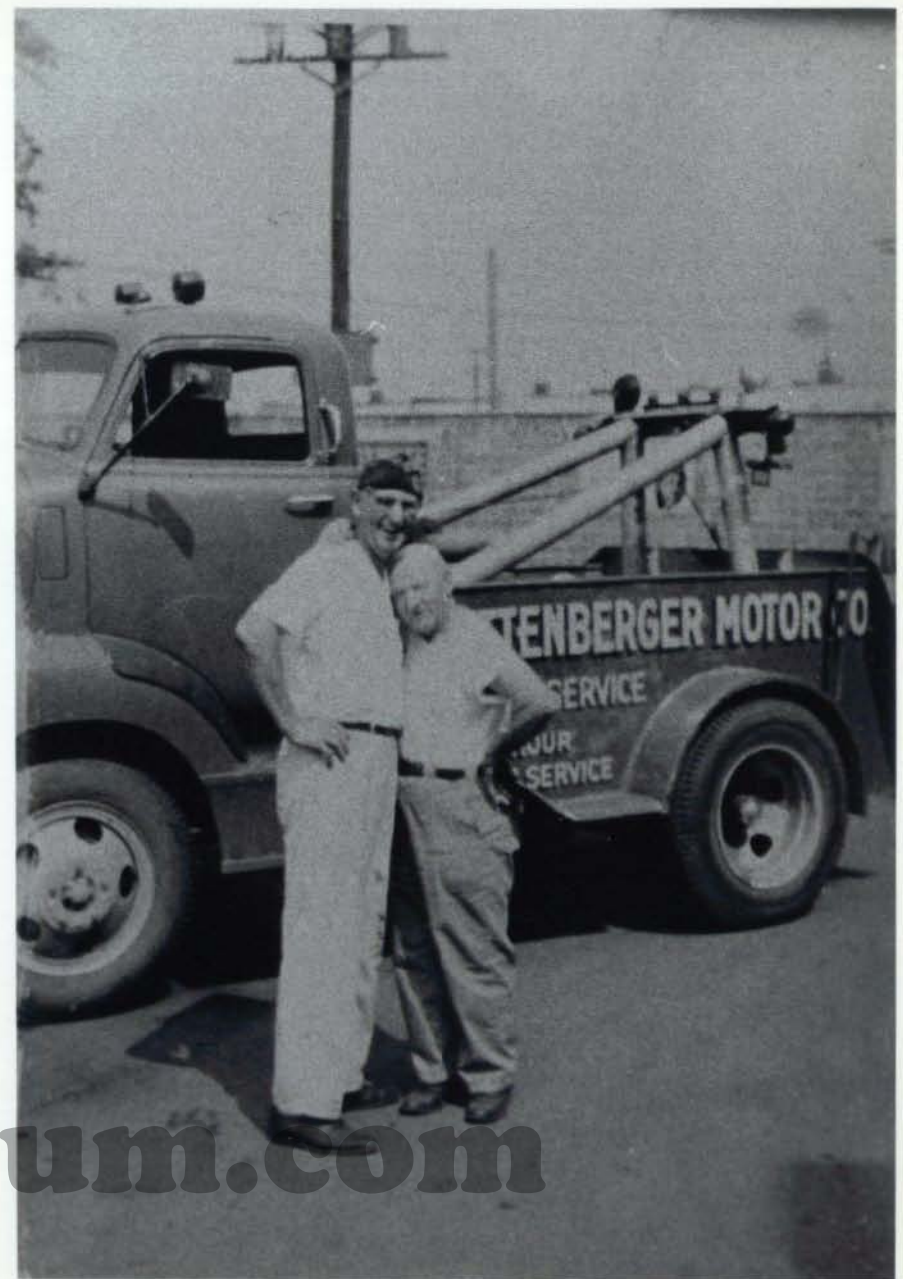














ONE POUND

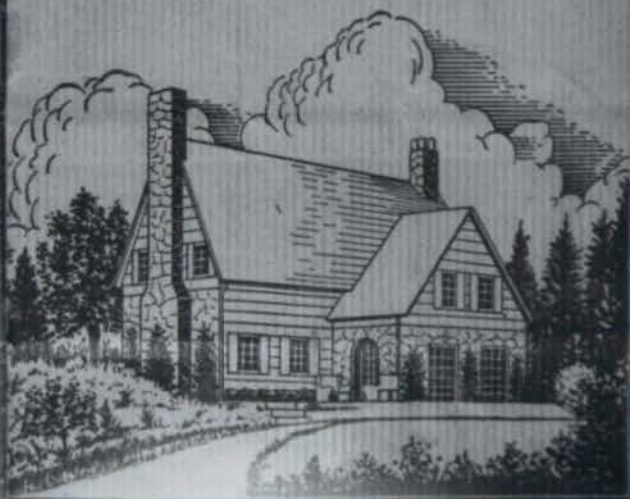
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